



Hungry 'Red Dragons' escort Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams.

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615th Aviation Support Battalion refuelers keep 4th BCT aircraft in the air.

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82nd Airborne reminisces about the last time they were here.

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Cav Country

Volume 1, Issue 19

"Telling the First Team's Story"

Jan. 8, 2005

Sculpture Commemorates First Team in Iraq

By Sgt. Christina Rockhill
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq-- Securing the Future, the name of the new memorial being sculpted for Fort Hood, Texas explains it all. Lt. Col. Frank Caponio, the personnel officer for the division, said it was important to choose an idea for the sculpture that rolled up everything the 1st Cavalry Division was doing in Iraq.

"We wanted to come up with a bronze monument that would capture the essence of what we're doing here in Task Force Baghdad for the Iraqi people," Caponio said. "We had many different pictures that we reviewed and we finally found one that we thought captured everything we wanted. It showed Soldiers who were protecting a child and at the same time were engaged in a combat operation."

The memorial will be a life-sized bronze sculpture, and will include all of the names of the fallen-division Soldiers. The monument will be placed outside of division headquarters at Fort Hood and should be finished by the time the troops head home. The sculpture is based on a photo of a situation involving troops from the 545th Military Police Company. In April, the Soldiers were escorting an explosive ordnance disposal team in Baghdad,

when a crowd of children gathered around them. The Soldiers were ambushed and five or six mortars impacted where the children were standing. The Soldiers had to jump into action, simultaneously applying aid to the wounded and securing the area.

"I think that this scene captures that in the sense that you see us and were in mode of protecting, we're rendering aid to this child who has just been wounded by the mortar and we're at the same time providing overwatch over the scene," Caponio said. "So what we're saying is we're going to protect you now and get you on the road to peace for the future so you can take over."

Caponio said it was important to the division to include children in the memorial.

"We wanted to use children, because we think that's the future," he said. "If we can affect the lives of these children right now they'll be able to carry on democracy for the future."

The two Soldiers in the picture chosen are Sgt. Matthew Tuttle and Sgt. Joshua Wood. Wood was the Soldier providing security, while Tuttle, a medic, was helping an injured child. They said they are honored to have been chosen to represent the division's efforts in Iraq.

"It feels weird," Wood said. "There are probably people out

there who deserve it more than I do."

Wood, from Crosby, Texas, said that day he didn't even hesitate before running out into the crowd of children to help them.

"Most of the kids were my son's age, which I think was the main reason that I think I ran out into it," he said. "If they were my kids I'd want somebody to help them."

Wood said the military is a family affair. His father is stationed at Camp Victory in Baghdad with the Third Armored Corps, his little brother is stationed with the 82nd Airborne, and his sister is in the National Guard. He said both his brother and sister are scheduled to join him in Iraq this month. Even though they are a military family, he hasn't told them he will be immortalized as part of the sculpture.

"I think it'd be hard for them to understand, till they come here," he said.

Tuttle on the other hand has told his wife and family about the memorial and said they are excited to see it. Tuttle, a father of two, said he didn't tell his 5-year-old son about the statue yet.

"I don't think he'd really understand anyway," the Fresno, Calif. native said. "When he's older I'll probably take him back and tell him a little bit."

Both Soldiers agree that

they'll probably come back to Fort Hood when they're older and show their kids and grandkids the memorial.

"It's just humbling," Tuttle said. "It's weird whenever I think that they're actually going to make this ...and it's of me."

1st Cavalry Division Museum Curator, Steve Draper said one of the purposes of the memorial is to recognize the Soldiers with the First Team.

"The memorial is dedicated to our Soldiers who have fallen in Operation Iraqi Freedom II, but also to the Soldiers who have survived and that have made up this wonderful division," Draper said. "We wanted to make a tribute to those Soldiers."

Draper also hopes the memorial will show all the great things the division is doing in Iraq.

"I think people have a different impression of what we're really doing here," he said. "I think that the press, unfortunately, doesn't show some of the great things that our division Soldiers have done and I think that this sculpture will provide them a... sense of that," he said. "I hope that it will give a sense of closure for those who have lost people here. I think it's important for them to understand that their sons and daughters did not die in vain here, but were here for a noble cause."

Caponio said the sculpture will be crafted in Baghdad by an Iraqi artist who asked to remain anonymous for his own safety.

"He's a fairly renowned artist in this country and has many works that are displayed all over the country," Caponio said.

Caponio also believes the memorial will be an area where Soldiers and family members can remember fallen loved ones.

"This will be a place, in the future, where Soldiers can come and take a few moments to remember their fallen comrades," he said. "So, it's a place of quiet reflection. It's a place to remember your friends and remember their sacrifices that they made for this effort in OIF II, to set the Iraqis and the children on the road to success."

Caponio also said he hopes Soldiers who served in OIF II will also be able to come and reflect upon their efforts in Baghdad.

"I think, in the future, as Soldiers go back and visit Fort Hood, they'll have this bronze monument to go reflect in front of and see again well into the rest of their lives," he said. "It will remind them of the sacrifices that their fellow Soldiers made, as well as sacrifices they made when they were over in Iraq in OIF II with Task Force Baghdad."



Iraqi National Guard Breaking New Ground

By Pfc. Mike Pryor
82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq - The command is "order, arms," and Cpl. Flaah Qader knows the drill by heart. Responding with quick, precise movements, the Iraqi National Guardsman swings his rifle from his shoulder, slaps the hand guard into his palm, and then slides the butt-stock gently to the ground.

Qader's performance is a textbook example.

Military drill and ceremony is no problem for Qader. Neither are raids, cordon searches, or any of the other tasks Qader and his fellow soldiers from Company C, 302nd Iraqi National Guard Battalion have been performing for the past eight months

alongside U.S. Army Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division.

When the American Soldiers are done with a mission, however, they go back to sleep in warm barracks with hot chow and internet access. Qader sleeps in a dilapidated building with no electricity, water, or toilet facilities. But that is soon going to change.

Ground was broken at the site Dec. 20, where more than \$400,000 in renovations to Qader's unit headquarters. A groundbreaking ceremony was attended by the commanders of the 302nd ING Bn., the 1st Cavalry Division's 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, and the 3rd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division.

"Charlie Company has performed admirably for many months, and it is my sincere desire that this renovated compound matches the effort you put forward every day," said Lt. Col. James Mingo, commander, 3-8 Cavalry, during his speech at the ceremony.

The renovation is expected to take five months to complete, said Dr. Hashim Mansour, the project's engineer.

The new compound will include sleeping quarters, a dining facility, new restrooms, an armory, enhanced security features, and possibly a recreation center, Mansour said.

The Iraqi National Guard Soldiers have waited more than 18 months for such a facility. The unit

See *ING*, page 3.

By Pfc. Mike Pryor, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs
Lt. Col. James Mingo, commander, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, shakes hands with Col. Hayder, commander, 302nd Iraqi National Guard Battalion.

Road to Mecca; A Pilgrim's Journey

By John Houston
Cultural Advisor, 1st Cav. Div.

As we celebrate the New Year, many Muslims will take part in a journey to Mecca, called the *Hajj*. The *Hajj* is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. The other four are *Shihadah* or "bearing witness" to the fundamental creed of Islam, participating in prayer, keeping the Fast during Ramadan, and paying the *Zakat* or religious tax.

The *Hajj* consists of going to Mecca and performing a series of rituals that are intended to reinforce the believer's basic religious convictions and also commemorates Abraham's act of faith in being prepared to sacrifice his son to God.

The *Hajj* proper occupies five days, starting around Jan. 19th and continuing on through the four feast days of *Id al-Adha*, roughly the 21st through the 24th of Jan.

There are three practices a pilgrim must perform during the *Hajj*. The first is donning a pilgrim's garment called an *Ihram* while voicing his intent to perform the *Hajj*. The *Ihram* is a two-piece, woven, seamless, white cloth that is intended to represent a burial shroud. One of the central ideas of the *Hajj* is that it is an occasion to appear before God, as on the Day of Judgment, without having actually died. The experience simulates the inevitable day of reckoning while he still has a chance to reform or further perfect himself.

The second mandatory ritual of the *Hajj* is standing on the plain of *Arafah*. This is intended to put the believer in a dramatic position, standing there with tens of thousands of other pilgrims, so as to reaffirm his belief and form a steadfast intention to observe his religious duties and do good for the remainder of his life.

The last mandatory practice is a pro-

cession around the *Ka'bah* which symbolizes the Muslim's recognition of the central place of God in the universe. It involves walking around a building, called the *Ka'bah*, seven times in a prescribed manner.

During the five days of the pilgrimage, participants may also participate in many other duties and customs to further highlight the experience.

Some visitors who travel to Mecca also precede the *Hajj* with a ritual called the *Umrah*, sometimes referred to as a "lesser *Hajj*."

One of the rituals common to both the *Umrah* and the *Hajj* is the *sa'y*, a ritual that commemorates the frantic search of Abraham's wife, Hagar, for water for her infant son Isma'il. God provided them with water from a miraculous spring known as the Spring of *Zamzam* which is now enclosed within the confines of the Grand Mosque that also houses the *Ka'bah*. The *sa'y* takes a pilgrim between two hillocks, called *Safa* and *Marwah*, seven times.

According to the tenants of Islam, the *Hajj* is a duty for all Muslims, but with certain limitations: he must be free, that is, not a slave; he must have reached puberty; he must be able to finance the trip without causing hardship to the family he supports and that money must have been honestly earned; his route to Mecca must be reasonably safe; and pilgrims should be reasonably healthy, because the rituals of the *Hajj* involve a certain amount of physical activity.

After a Muslim has successfully made this trek, he is entitled to be addressed as '*Haajj*' (or '*Haajja*' for females), a formal title of respect.

The pilgrimage to Mecca is a very moving and unique experience for Muslims in general and many consider it the high point of their religious lives.

Medical Testing Will Help Combat Tuberculosis in Iraq

By Capt. William Porter
Preventive Medicine Officer
1st Cavalry Division

Soldiers who deploy to foreign lands face numerous medical threats that are not present in the United States. Tuberculosis is an illness that is spread through the air (by coughing and sneezing) and attacks the lungs. It is one of the most significant threats to a Soldier's health in Iraq. The World Health Organization currently estimates that 1 in every 400 Iraqis have tuberculosis, compared to 1 out of every 33,000 individuals in the United States.

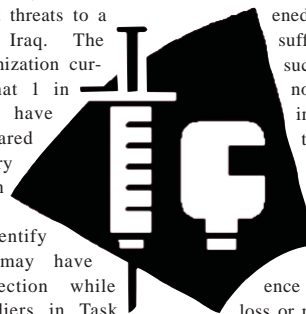
In order to identify individuals who may have acquired the infection while deployed, all Soldiers in Task Force Baghdad will be tested for the disease during their redeployment processing. This is accomplished by injecting a small amount of a purified tuberculosis protein derivative under the skin on the forearm. This injection cannot transmit tuberculosis. However, if the individual has been infected with tuberculosis, their immune system will react to the injection site and it will become red, hard, inflamed or painful.

Most people who acquire tuberculosis are able to suppress the infection and

will not experience any symptoms. Although their skin test will be reactive, these individuals are said to have a latent infection and cannot transmit tuberculosis to others. The purpose of treatment for latent infection is to prevent the occurrence of the debilitating and serious symptoms of active infection.

Individuals with weakened immunity or those who suffer from other illnesses, such as cancer or HIV, may not be able to suppress the infection. In these cases, the infection may progress from a latent infection to an active infection. People who develop an active infection may experience a chronic fever, weight loss or night sweats. They may have a chronic cough, cough up blood, or have chest pain. These people will also have a reactive skin test, and can transmit the disease to others. Treatment of actively infected patients normally requires multiple drugs to ensure eradication of the disease.

In conclusion, the risk of acquiring tuberculosis while in Iraq should not be ignored. Soldiers who develop positive skin tests during the redeployment process should immediately seek out advice from their health care provider.



Spur & The Moment

Photos by Cpl. Bill Putnam, 122nd MPAD

"What are your New Year's resolutions?"

"To get closer to God."



Spc. Alex Gambrelli
HHC 5BCT

"To get home alive next year."



Sgt. 1st Class Michael Lee, 68th Chemical Co.
1-21 FA

"To quit smoking and get back home alive."



Spc. Joel Newgard
Company D
1-8 Cavalry

"I don't have any really."



CWO Bryan Rude
HHC 5BCT

"I haven't even thought that far ahead yet."



1st Lt. Joshua MacLean
1-7 Cavalry

"To bring freedom to the Iraqi people and quit smoking."



Spc. Nick Hubert
Company D
1-8 Cavalry

Commanding General:
Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli
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Lt. Col. James Hutton
122 Mobile Public Affairs Detachment Commander:
Maj. John Fuhrman
Public Affairs Supervisor:
Master Sgt. Dave Larsen
1st Sgt. 122 Mobile Public Affairs Detachment:
1st Sgt. William Kuhn
Editor: Sgt. 1st Class Tony Sailer
Layout: Sgt. Dan Purcell
Staff Writers: Staff Sgt. Susan German, Staff Sgt. Merion LaSonde, Sgt. Dan Purcell, Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, Cpl. Bill Putnam, Spc. Jan Critchfield, Spc. Al Barrus, Spc. Erik LeDrew, Spc. Marie Whitney
Contributors: Staff Sgt. Rebekah-Mae Bruns, Sgt. John Queen, Sgt. Thomas Benoit, Spc. Erin Robicheaux, Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin, Pfc. Mike Pryor, Pfc. Brian Schroeder

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Stability Attained; Black Jack Returns to Baghdad

By Spc. Erik LeDrew
122nd MPAD

CAMP STRIKER, Baghdad, Iraq -- The 2nd Brigade Combat Team (BCT), of the 1st Cavalry Division recently returned to their usual area of operations in Baghdad after assisting the 1st Marine Division in their efforts to restore peace and stability to former insurgent stronghold Fallujah and the surrounding townships.

Known as the "Black Jack" Brigade, the 2nd BCT returned to Camp Striker, Baghdad on Dec. 16, nearly two months after they first arrived at the Marines' Camp Fallujah.

When portions of the 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division and 256th Infantry Brigade took over the Black Jack Brigade's usual area of operations in western Baghdad on Oct. 26, the 2nd Brigade sent the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment (1-5 Cav.), 15th Forward Support Battalion (FSB), and an artillery battery from the 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment to Camp Fallujah.

Although they left several other battalions in Baghdad, the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment joined the rest of the Black Jack Brigade at Camp



A Soldier stands guard outside the Black Jack Brigade's Tactical Operations Center at Camp Striker Dec. 24 just after the 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, returned from Fallujah after spending more than a month conducting combat operations with the 1st Marine Division around the city.

Fallujah on Nov. 23, two and a half weeks after the assault commenced.

"Our mission in Fallujah was two-part," said Col. Michael Formica, brigade commander, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. "First: Isolate the city, allowing no one out or in so the 1st Marine Division could engage the enemy inside the city; and second, we went into a pursuit to disrupt the enemies [fleeing Fallujah] so they wouldn't get the

chance to further endanger the Iraqi elections."

According to Formica, once the Black Jack Soldiers established the outer cordon around Fallujah near the beginning of November, nobody except women and children were allowed out of the city and no one at all was allowed in.

"[After they established the cordon], mortar and rocket attacks became nonexistent, and [improvised explosive device] attacks

went down into the single digits," he added.

In addition to maintaining the cordon around the city, the Black Jack Soldiers were also responsible for conducting raids on the outlying townships around Fallujah to root-out insurgents that had fled the city.

"We detained several high-ranking insurgents in the towns around Fallujah," Formica said.

Being tasked to the 1st Marine Division, most of the operations the Black Jack Soldiers participated in were joint operations involving elements of Marine units such as the 2nd Marine Recon Battalion and the 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Army Infantry Regiment.

"We were task-organizing down to the platoon-level with the Marines," Formica said. "We were integrating three types of infantry in these operations: Marine Infantry, our Mechanized Infantry, and Striker Infantry [1-5 Inf.]."

"The three different types of Infantry actually complemented each other exceptionally well."

According to Formica, many of his Soldiers spent weeks in the dusty fields around Fallujah with bare-bones amenities, just to accomplish their mission.

"It speaks highly of their commitment," Formica said, "that some of them went out to Fallujah and slept in the dirt for weeks on end just to accomplish the mission-and I'm speaking of [the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment] specifically."

The Soldiers of the Black Jack Brigade have been through much over the course of their deployment, having patrolled the volatile Abu Ghraib area most days, moving down to Najaf at the beginning of August to counter the Shiite insurgency there, and lastly to Fallujah, the insurgent stronghold that became the anti-Iraqi forces' rallying cry before the 1st Mar. Div. and the 2nd Brigade reduced the city to rubble.

"I could not be more proud of the flexibility and tenacity of my Soldiers and what they have accomplished," Formica said.

Although the 2nd Brigade only recently returned to Baghdad, they were quick to recover and, indeed, they are already looking forward to the future.

"We're currently preparing for future combat operations," Formica said, "as well as prepping for redeployment back to the States. But it's good to be back in Baghdad with the 1st Cav."

1st Cav Helps ING Build New Barracks

From *ING*, page 1.

was formed under the Coalition Provisional Authority after the ouster of Saddam Hussein in 2003. When the CPA transferred power to the Iraqi Interim Government in June 2004, the unit was redesignated as Company C, 302nd ING Bn. At that time, its members began working together with American troops. Their duties have included conducting raids, performing cordon and search operations, and manning traffic control points throughout Baghdad's International Zone.

After spending months training and conducting operations with the Iraqi troops, Sgt. Shane Martin, an ING liaison with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, said he felt confident leaving the security of the International Zone in their hands.

"These guys will do good," Martin said.

The Iraqi guardsmen agreed

with assessment.

Lt. Sa'ad Abdul Hussein, a platoon leader with Charlie Company, said his Soldiers were ready to complete any mission. Working side by side with the Americans had given them the confidence to accomplish whatever tasks they are given, Hussein said.

Qader said he had no doubt about his company's ability to perform its duties. Charlie Company, he said, is the best company in the ING.

Qader's pride was not unusual on a day that saw his unit finally seeing the rewards of its months of hard work. Yet, even with a new headquarters compound, the future is not all bright for the soldiers of C Co. There will be many hardships and dangers in the days ahead.

Company C is ready for those risks, Hussein said.

"We are not afraid," he said, "If a soldier is afraid of anything, then he is not a soldier."



Photos by Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

Army Chief of Staff Visits Camp Taji

Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker, Chief of Staff, US Army, awards Chief Warrant Officer Steven Wells from Lampasas, Texas assigned to Troop E, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division the Silver Star Medal for his actions in rescuing a downed pilot, Dec 26. Schoomaker also presented the Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star Medal with "V" device and reenlisted nine First Team troopers during the visit.

Soldiers Host "Iraqi Sick Call" in Eastern Baghdad

By Staff Sgt. Bryan Valenzuela
1-82 FA Public Affairs

RUSTAMIYAH, Baghdad, Iraq -- On Dec. 8, Soldiers from Bravo and Headquarters Batteries, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division brought much needed medical care to Iraqis living in the rural area of Al-Khargoulia, in eastern Baghdad. The 1-82 Field Artillery, Dragons, used a local elementary school

to conduct what they call an "Iraqi sick call." Dragon Soldiers and medics administered medical care, treating maladies ranging from routine to emergency care.

The operation was a hit with the locals, who formed a line that stretched around the school. Soldiers from Bravo Battery moved in and secured the area, establishing a protective cordon around the school, while medics from Headquarters Battery established initial

screening and treatment areas. During the four-hour event, 110 Iraqis, mostly children, were treated.

"It's great to get out here and do this," said 1st Lt. Jerry Depold, of Bolton, Conn., a Physicians Assistant and the Dragon's chief "Doc." Most of these people haven't seen a doctor in years. They are just happy to know they were seen by professionals."

While the medical check-ups are very popular, they are just a small part

of what the Dragons have done for the this community.

"This is just the latest facet of our continuing commitment to [the Iraqis]," said Battery B Commander, Capt. John Champy, of Magnolia, Ark. "We've built roads, water treatment plants, and schools. The medical support is nice, though, because it's immediately effective," Champy said. A sick kid comes in and leaves with the supplies to treat him; that's the best part."



Photos by Staff Sgt. Bryan Valenzuela, 1-82 FA Public Affairs

1st Lt. Jerry "Doc" Depold, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment screens patients during an "Iraqi sick call." Soldiers from Bravo and Headquarters Batteries visited Iraqis in eastern Baghdad and administered medical care to the people.



A group of local women talks to a medic from 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, 1st Cavalry Division. The women were among the many Iraqi people helped by the Soldiers as they conducted an "Iraqi sick call."

1st Brigade Combat Team Soldiers Deliver Supplies to Hospital

By Spc. Jan Critchfield
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL-AMAL, Baghdad, Iraq -- In an effort to improve relations with the cit-

izens of the Sadr City area, Soldiers of Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division delivered medical supplies to a

local hospital Dec. 13.

"Today we delivered medical supplies for an emergency room at the Al-Qadissyaia hospital," Company C commander Capt. Troy Denomy said. "This donation serves two purposes ... it fulfills a promise we made to the hospital, and it shows the good will of the American people."

Supplies delivered included four electrocardiograph machines, seven oxygen canisters, two oxygen regulators, two anesthesia machines, six CPR assistance bags, and other assorted life-saving equipment that totaled roughly \$50,000.

These types of donations are "absolutely critical in Sadr City," Denomy said. "We spoke with the hospital staff, and these are the types of things they said they need."

Bought and shipped to Iraq by a non-profit organization in the United States, the

'Any time you can put a smile on someone's face is a good day.'

- Capt. Troy Denomy

supplies are bound to help the doctors at Al-Qadissyaia hospital save lives, according to the hospital's director, who asked not to be named for security.

"Because of the bad condition in our country, we have a deficiency in certain items ... especially in the [electrocardiograph] machines and machines for anesthesia," the director said. "Because we have good relations and connection with the [multinational] forces ... they ask about our needs."

"We are very lucky to receive good things from the [multinational] forces because we are in real need," the director said. "[Electrocardiograph] machines are very important to our work for cardiology ... and very serious conditions. We have an old machine, but these machines are very new. These new machines are going to help us save lives," the director said.

Predominately a focus of the U.S. Army's combat power due to a recurring insurgency, a time of relative peace has allowed TF 2-5 Cav. to shift much of their focus in Sadr City to reconstruction and civil military operations.

"We visit this hospital at least twice a month to see how they're doing," Denomy said. "It's always good to do something good for the [Iraqi] people. Any time you can put a smile on someone's face is a good day."



By Spc. Jan Critchfield, 122nd MPAD

Soldiers of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division unload supplies at a hospital in Baghdad's Sadr City neighborhood.

Black Jack

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Soldiers Skip Lunch to Hunt for Explosives

By Spc. Andy Miller
122nd MPAD

CAMP STRIKER, Baghdad, Iraq -- Capt. Matt Schoenfeldt, the Colt platoon leader for Fox Battery, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, was commenting on the chicken wings as he walked out of the Camp Striker dining facility Dec. 14. Today there were several flavors available, instead of the usual just one, he said.

He didn't have a chance to try the spicy or teriyaki though.

That's because as he was about to sit down, a call came in on the radio he carries with him when his platoon is on explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) escort duty. Moments later, the Colts were enroute to rendezvous with one of Baghdad's EOD teams.

"EOD is a pretty [high level] target," Schoenfeldt said. "[The enemy] understands those are the guys who go out and defuse the [improvised explosive devices]."

When EOD gets called out for a disposal mission, Schoenfeldt's platoon is right there with them, from the moment they leave the gate, to the resulting ordnance disposal. His squads take turns running 24-hour EOD escort shifts.

"Once EOD lands in sector... they're pretty busy doing their job," explained Sgt. Rafael Berastain, the Colt platoon's 1st squad leader. "They don't have time to be looking around, looking for enemies. We are the ones protecting them while



By Spc. Andy Miller, 122nd MPAD

Portland, Ore. native Spc. Joseph Werner, a fire support specialist with Colt platoon of 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, pulls security at the site of unexploded ordnance in Baghdad.

they are doing their job."

The mission has put the Colt platoon Soldiers in the path of insurgents more than once during their two months on the job. A job they were assigned when their entire 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Cavalry Division was extended for several months beyond its original return date.

The danger of Baghdad's streets is nothing new the Colt platoon, which has been acting as the brigade's quick-reaction force and convoy security force, in addition to conducting patrols, raids and other missions, since they arrived to Baghdad

last February. As a wheeled-vehicle fire support element, the Colts are used to training and working together as a small team, according to Schoenfeldt.

"For us it really hasn't been too much of a stretch, because the Colts... they're designed to work in small teams anyway," Schoenfeldt said. "So small unit tactics, these guys took over real quickly."

The EOD escort mission is another variation of what the Colts have been doing all year. It's just that instead of trying to avoid IEDs, now the Colts do look for them.

"It's better that we find it and nobody

gets hurt, than somebody else finds it the wrong way," Berastain said. "So I don't mind going out there and looking for them. I don't mind at all."

The Dec. 14 mission they missed lunch for turned out to be for an already defused piece of unexploded ordnance (UXO).

Spc. John Williams, an EOD Soldier with the 788th EOD Company from Fort McCoy, Wis., said all their calls are important, even when they don't find an IED or UXO.

"It's better to be safe than sorry," Williams said. "We run a lot of hoaxes, a lot of trash, but some of the things that we run into I would think were something."

The second time the Soldiers were called out that day, they were waiting in line to put their order in at the Burger King on Camp Al-Tahreer (Liberty). That call was for a couple more UXOs in Baghdad, one an anti-vehicle mine.

It was a slow day though, according to Berastain.

"Usually we're busier, as far the calls we were getting and the stuff we were finding," Berastain said. "We were getting just UXO calls, most of the time it's IEDs. The landmine was actually a real call because if someone would have driven over that mine it would have blown up, but other than that it was just UXOs today."

After the first three missions, the platoon made it back to camp long enough to grab some chow. Then they waited, not long, before the next mission.

Roughriders Recall Successes in Abu Ghraib, Fallujah

By Spc. Andy Miller
122nd MPAD

CAMP STRIKER, Baghdad, Iraq--After patrolling for 10 months in the volatile Abu Ghraib neighborhood of Baghdad, and a recent mission during the assault on Fallujah, the 3rd Platoon of Company A 'Annihilators', 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, recently returned to their temporary home at Camp Striker near the Baghdad International Airport Dec. 16.

Taking a break from the battle during the holiday season, the Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, 'Roughriders', recalled about some of their experiences over the past year as the only infantry (mechanized) company attached to Task Force 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry. Task Force 2-12 Cav oversaw military operations in the Abu Ghraib area until November when the 2nd BCT was extended and responsibility for the area was handed off to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 10th Mountain Division.

"From day one... it's been straight combat ops for us. I don't think there was hardly a day that

went by that we didn't have some kind of encounter," Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Fallin, the Roughriders platoon leader, said. "All my guys, from the section leaders on down to the lowest soldier...they've all had plenty of experience with dealing with insurgency on the ground."

Their dealings with insurgents began almost immediately after taking over for the 1st Armored Division at Raider Base in Abu Ghraib last April. The platoon defended the base against violent and prolonged insurgent attacks for several days during the siege.

"Early April was the pinnacle point that let everybody know that 'hey this is a bad spot'," Fallin said, of the early April attacks on his platoon.



1st Lt. William Mercucci

From that time forward, the ebb and flow of combat operations continued with a steady persistency for the Roughriders.

"Basically in Abu Ghraib, [we] maintained enemy contact. Every six hours, we always had contact with the enemy," 1st Lt. William Mercucci, the Roughriders platoon leader, said. "We faced the enemy every single day, no matter what...be it [improvised explosive devices (IEDs)], small arms fire or [rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs)]. We are the most experienced platoon facing the enemy. So 3rd platoon is really one of those platoons that's always there and [the task force] can always count on us."

When 1-5 Cav's deployment orders were extended in November to help provide extra security in Iraq for the Jan. 30 elections, the Annihilators began preparing for their next mission; to help retake the city of Fallujah.

During combat operations in and around Fallujah, the Roughriders were highly successful in their role to seek out insurgents and weapons caches. While working with both the Marine Corps and other Cavalry Division Task Forces, the Roughriders were



Sgt. Jesse Montoya

on scene for some the largest weapons cache finds in the area.

"Of course going into each operation, nobody really knew what to expect," Fallin said. "They figured [some insurgents] fled somewhere outside the city, so obviously we'd go into each area expecting the worst. We were actually pretty successful in finding large caches everywhere we went."

Mercucci attributes his platoon's high success rate to the high level of experience they gained while working in Abu Ghraib.

"Basically because of the experience that we had, it made us different," Mercucci said. "We know the terrain. We know the enemy, and that's what made us a really unique fighting force."

Lockhart, Texas native Sgt.

Jesse Montoya, the 3rd platoon leader's gunner, recalled an event in Fallujah where some of the Soldiers had a close brush with an IED. Several Soldiers from another platoon walked right by a 155mm round rigged to go off like a bomb. Montoya blew it in place using the Bradley Fighting Vehicle's 25mm main gun.

"There are a lot of tactics, like cordon the area, and wait for [explosive ordnance disposal (EOD)]. But that gives the enemy time to react," Montoya said. I think the blowing the IED in place... is one of the most effective ways of destroying the IED. It's kind of gratifying."

Montoya said he believes the Bradley is one of the best vehicles the Army has for fighting in urban areas like Abu Ghraib and Fallujah. It's saved a lot of lives, he said.

"Overall, the enemy respects the mechanized infantry," Mercucci added. "They know if they shoot a Bradley, the Bradley is going to go straight to [them], and its going to dismount, and its going to hunt [them] all the way down. We are not going to just shoot and go, that is the beauty of the infantry."

3BCT Prosthetics Lab Creates Limbs, Hope

By Staff Sgt. Susan German
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL-TAWHEED, Baghdad, Iraq - Getting the word out to the people of Iraq requires a concerted daily effort on the part of the Soldiers of the United States military in their campaign to gain the trust and confidence of the Iraqi people.

The media has served as a conduit toward that goal, usually tempering the bad with the good, whether at home or abroad. As ambassadors for America, U.S. Soldiers come under constant scrutiny; it's nice when the positive things they do are appropriately portrayed.

Col. Mike Murray, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, hosted his biweekly media huddle attended by local Iraqi media, including television, radio, and newspaper journalists, at the 3rd BCT headquarters at Camp Union I in Baghdad, Iraq, Dec. 7.

Murray spoke to them about some of his brigade's recent successes, which included joint Iraqi and American military operations resulting in the seizures of two large weapons caches in the Sheikh Maruf area of Baghdad and the arrest of more than 30 insurgents in the past month. He also expressed his condolences to the families of those who were killed and injured in the Dec. 4 suicide car bomb in front of the Al Karkh Police Department.

In addition to progress reports on completed and ongoing projects, as well as stability and security issues, Murray highlighted a 3rd BCT accomplishment during his media huddles with the local media, allowing them to present the information to the Iraqi people through their various mediums.

Deep in the basement of the palace which houses the brigade, in the former kitchen, is a working prosthetics lab. The location was chosen primarily for its large oven that was left behind by family members of Saddam Hussein. The oven is able to reach temperatures high enough to heat the plastic sheets needed for the prosthetic molds.

Located next to the MWR's Internet café and television viewing area, most are unaware that the lab exists. It first received some exposure when an Iraqi interpreter who



Photos by Staff Sgt. Susan German, 122nd MPAD

Capt. Steve Lindsley, a logistics officer with the 112th Military Police Battalion, 89th Military Police Brigade, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, makes adjustments to the prosthetic leg for a young Iraqi boy who was involved in a hit-and-run car accident, one of the first patients fitted for a new leg at the 3rd BCT's prosthetic lab at Camp Union I.

had worked for Company C, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom I was having trouble receiving a prosthetic leg from his civilian employer after he had lost his leg due to injuries sustained during a U.S. military operation.

A story written by journalist T. Christian Miller of the Los Angeles Times was brought to the attention of the lab's founders, Sgt. Chris Cummings and Capt. Steve Lindsley,

by Capt. Rob Edwards, an intelligence officer with the 112th Military Police Battalion, 89th Military Police Brigade 3rd BCT, who read the article in Stars and Stripes.

Soldiers from the 5th Brigade Combat Team helped the interpreter get to 3rd BCT headquarters, where the prosthetics team was able to make him a new leg. In the meantime, the interpreter's employer arranged for him to travel to Jordan to receive a prosthetic leg and physical therapy. When he returns to Iraq, he

will have a second leg waiting for him.

As the journalists gathered around him in the lab, Cummings explained some of the technical aspects of the lab, as well as how they find their patients, many times by chance.

The Fort Lauderdale, Fla. native is a civil affairs specialist who first came to Iraq on a nine-month tour with the Florida-based 478th Civil Affairs Battalion and is now serving a second nine-month tour with the 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion, from Warwick, R.I. He voluntarily extended his tour specifically to continue his work with the prosthetics mission.

"This is my civil affairs project now," Cummings said. "I'm fortunate enough that people like the project and realize the importance of it enough that they've given me full-time work over here."

Cummings left behind an orthotics and prosthetics manufacturing business he had built over the last 12 years when he was mobilized for duty to Iraq.

Cummings, along with Lindsley, and Edwards, who volunteered his help to the two professionals, after he heard of the shipping dilemma they were having, trying to receive supplies from the states. A friend at Federal Express, in Memphis, Tenn., was able to arrange for more expeditious shipments of supplies from the U.S.

The team has helped fit and make prostheses for 61 patients, of various ages and from diverse backgrounds. On his way to a meeting at a hospital in Karadah regarding sponsorship and training of Iraqi lab technicians, Cummings spotted his first two prosthetics patients standing less than a block apart on a Karadah street. Both were young and fit the criteria of a good candidate and subsequently fitted for prosthetic legs.

Lindsley is a logistics officer for the 112th MP Bn. At home, he manages the Methodist Orthotics and Prosthetics Department in Monroe, La., affiliated with the Methodist Rehabilitation Center in Jackson, Miss. The hospital has been instrumental in providing much needed supplies to the mission in Baghdad, according to Lindsley. In a good year back in the states, with a full team of trained technicians and staff, Lindsley handles the type of caseload that he's already seen in Baghdad in just several months.

Murray informed the media that the 3rd BCT will be looking to transfer sponsorship of the prosthetics lab to the Iraqis prior to their departure from Baghdad and hand over the tools and equipment which have been purchased by the U.S. government as well as donated by businesses in the U.S.

Cummings highlighted successes that they have experienced in the past few months as Lindsley assisted a proud Iraqi National Guard captain who practiced walking with his new prosthetic legs, an Iraqi camera crew recording his steps.

The team expressed their thanks to everyone who has helped them make a difference - the support of their brigade commanders Col. Mike Murray, 3rd BCT and Col. David Phillips, 89th MP, Lindsley's hospital and FedEx.

"For now it may not be safe for these Iraqis to say that Americans helped them, but someday it will be," Edwards said. "In their hearts they will know American Soldiers took the time to get them back on their feet, in more ways than one."



(Above) Prosthetic feet are lined up and ready for their prospective owners.

(Right) Capt. Rob Edwards, an intelligence officer for the 112th Military Police Battalion, 89th Military Police Brigade, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, from busts plaster out of socket that will become the base for a prosthetic leg. A police detective from Tupelo, Miss., Edwards is a "volunteer," the only one on the team without prosthetics experience but he's learned a lot through on-the-job training.



Warriors

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Photos by Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD
(Above) Staff Sgt. John Guardian of Los Angeles, a medic with the 50th Medical Air Ambulance Company, 101st Airborne Division, packs up his medical bag as he begins his shift.
(Left) Los Angeles, Ca., resident Spc. Anthony Mendoza, a crew chief with the 50th Med AA Co., 101st Airborne Division straps down some loose gear before take-off.
(Right) An injured Iraqi Police Officer is taken by helicopter to a medical facility by Soldiers of the 45th and 50th Med AA Co.



Medics with Wings; One Crew's Story

By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel
122nd MPAD

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - It's the call no Soldier wants to make or hear. "Break! Break! Standby for nine-line medical evacuation" when those words come across the radio, radio traffic comes to an immediate halt, Soldiers are down; Soldiers need help.

Standing at the ready, able to move out as soon as the call is sent, are the Soldiers of the Army's Air Ambulance companies. This is the story of one crew, on one day, in one such company.

Sgt. Melinda Lauderdale is a medic with the 45th Medical Air Ambulance Company (Med AA Co.), 421st Medical Battalion stationed at Camp Taji.

"I've always had so much respect for the medics in the air," she said, "they're out there all by themselves. They would come in to drop off a patient and I would just think to myself....that's what I want to do."

Lauderdale was originally stationed with the 557th Ground Ambulance Company in Wiesbaden, Germany also of the 421st Med. Bat. when the 45th got called to deploy.

"When I heard the 45th was getting deployed, I told my commander I would do anything to go with them," the Reno, N.V. resident explained.

A shortage in personnel and a willing commander worked in her favor as a request to transfer was approved and she arrived in Iraq with the company in December last year.

Fast forward to early December of this year, Lauderdale and the 45th are winding down their deployment. Their replacements, the 50th Med AA Co, 101st Airborne Division are on station. It's the second Iraq rotation for the 50th, combat tested and forged, these Soldiers know the drill. On their last deployment, the 'Dust-Off' medics of the 50th worked the northern sector of

Iraq, seeing action in Tikrit, Mosul and others areas in the region. Even with all the experience the 50th has accumulated, a bit of area familiarization is in order.

The day starts early for the 'first-up' crew, the sun just starting its rise in the sky. The biting cold of the early hour numbs the gloved hands of Spc. Anthony Mendoza, a crew chief with the 50th, as he assembles his flight vest, checking and re-checking everything.

"Gotta make sure everything is online and ready to go," the Los Angeles native said. "You just never know when the call is going to come in."

'First-Up' means Mendoza and his crew are the first to respond when a call comes in, so Mendoza is making sure his UH-60 Black Hawk is ready to fly.

"We do everything a crew chief in a regular aviation unit would do and then some," Mendoza said. "From pulling security...which...you do everywhere, to helping the medics with just about anything. That's really what sets this job apart, working so closely with the medics."

Filling out Mendoza's 'first-up' crew are the two pilots of the aircraft, Lauderdale, and a medic from the 50th, Staff Sgt. John Guardian, also from Los Angeles.

The first mission of the day is a non-emergency situation, two Soldiers need ambulated from Camp Al-Saqr (Falcon) to

the 31st Combat Support Hospital (CASH) in the International Zone. The mission gives the crew an opportunity to familiarize themselves with each other as well as the area.

"They've changed the names of some of these Camps a few times since we've been here," Lauderdale said. "So if I slip between names, or it gets confusing, just let me know."

Guardian gives her the thumbs up as the bird touches down at the 31st CASH. Lauderdale and Guardian both jump out and escort the two Soldiers into the hospital as Mendoza gets out and stretches his legs. The medics return and load up, time to head back to Camp Taji.

There's an old saying 'You always feed and brush the horses before you put them in the stable,' same holds true for an Air Ambulance helicopter.

"You never know how long a mission is going to last," Mendoza said. "The last thing you need out there is to run out of fuel."

At the conclusion of every mission, a stop is made at the Forward Arming and Refueling Point (FARP) to top off the gas tank before the bird can be brought back to its resting place on the airfield.

Between flights the crews work to make sure everything is ready for the next mission, medics help crew chiefs and vice versa. On a good day there's enough spacing between flights to have the bird ready to go

and still have some downtime.

Lauderdale sits reading a newspaper, Soldiers of her unit laugh and joke with the familiarity of a group that's been to hell and back together, shared experiences forge common bonds. As luck would have it, the power is out in the 45th's headquarters building pushing all of the Soldiers out to the courtyard just on the other side of the flight line.

"Normally when the power is working you'd spend the time between missions, checking e-mail, watching movies in the ready room, that sort of stuff," Lauderdale said.

About half-way through their shift, the alarm on the radio goes off. Two birds are needed, seven are wounded. The easy banter and laughter of a few minutes ago is replaced with hurried motion and shouted calls as crew members sprint to their aircraft.

When a medevac is called, all other flights on the airfield stop until the medical birds have cleared the airspace, within a few minutes the two aircraft are up and on their way to the location.

"Iraq police were hit, seven wounded," Lauderdale announced as the Black Hawk speeds through the air. Flying low and fast, the bird quickly makes it way to the scene and drops down, Lauderdale and Guardian jump out and begin tending to the wounded. Two patients load into the aircraft, one walks himself, Mendoza helps him adjust his seat belt. The other patient is brought in via litter, shrapnel wound to the head, time is of the essence as the crew straps him in, gives the pilots the thumbs up and the Black Hawk is in the air heading for the hospital.

Slouching down next to the newspaper she dropped when the call came in, Lauderdale is visibly exhausted.

"I love my job, I really do. I love helping people....but, you come to work every-day hoping you don't fly," she said. "Any day we don't fly is a good day."



Medical designated UH-60 Black Hawks sit on the flight line ready to go .

FARP Keeps the 4th Brigade Comb

By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel
122nd MPAD

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - FARP. No, it's not the sound you make after drinking a soda to fast, it stands for Forward Arming and Refueling Point and it keeps the aircraft of the 4th Brigade Combat Team in the fight.

Broken down into two 12-hour shifts, First Team troopers of Headquarters Support Company, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 4th BCT man a redesigned FARP on Camp Taji.

"When we first arrived on Camp Taji, there was trash all over the landing pad, the area wasn't really big enough and....it was just a mess," said the 615th ASB commander and Cedar Hill, Tenn. native Lt. Col. David Parker.

Parker said once an initial assessment was complete, plans were drawn up and Soldiers set to work 'improving the fox hole.'

"When my Soldiers sat down and began planning out the layout they really put some forward thought into the FARP's design," he said. "Whoever inherits this from us is going to be coming in to a really nice set-up."

The first order of business was to get the landing pad clear of debris and to establish a security perimeter said Sgt. Rob Trigg a squad leader with the 1st shift.

"Mortar rounds and shrapnel are of course a concern so we installed blast walls along the perimeter of the FARP to offer some protection," Trigg said. "We expanded the landing pad so we can handle more aircraft, installed airfield lights for night time operations, set up trailers for our personnel out here, laid a walk-way from the trailers to the pad...just anything we could do to make it better. To the best of my knowledge, we have the biggest FARP in theater."

With its current configuration, the FARP can accommodate six aircraft simultaneously. According to Trigg, in an average day approximately 75 aircraft touch down and top off. Over the course of the deployment, that has equaled a lot of fuel.

"So far we've pumped over 3.3 million gallons of fuel. To put that into perspective back in garrison, it would take us about five years to pump that much," he said.

It takes many Soldiers to man the FARP; one to man the radio, one

to operate the pump, one safety non-commissioned officer, and others are responsible for filling the aircraft, taking turns with the different responsibilities.

"It takes two Soldiers to fill an aircraft," said Spc. Geoffrey Ives, a petroleum supply specialist from Tucson, Az. "One to fill the aircraft and one to operate the fire extinguisher system. We make sure to take turns so everyone knows how to do each others' job."

The FARP handles not only Army aircraft but any Multi-National Force Helicopter that may touch down.

"We will take care of any [Multi-National Force] aircraft. No one gets turned away," said Longview, Texas resident Sgt. Terrance Avila.

With so many aircraft coming in, the potential for an accident is high. To date, the platoon's safety record is impeccable.

"We haven't had a single safety violation or spill since we got here," Avila said. "That's pretty impressive."

"My Soldiers out there are doing some amazing work," said Parker. "Without them, this brigade would shut down."



Sgt. Rob Trigg of Madison, Miss., a Aviation Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Forward Arming and Refueling Point on Camp Taji help keep in the air.



By Chief Warrant Officer Chris Wilson, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.

4th Brigade OH-58Ds 'Kiowa Warriors' that patrol the skies of Baghdad are just some of the aircraft that the Headquarters Support Company, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division's Forward Arming and Refueling Point on Camp Taji help keep in the air.



Tucson, Az native Spc. Geoffrey Ives a petroleum supply specialist with Headquarters Support Company, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division stands ready at a fire extinguisher. One filling the aircraft, the other watching for

at Team in Flight and in the Fight



squad leader with Headquarters Support Company, 615th de Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division pulls a hose off the Apache Longbow helicopter. Trigg works at the 615th ASB's n Camp Taji.



(Left and Below) Pfc. Rasheen Davis of Chicago with Headquarters Support Company, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division tops off a Black Hawk Helicopter. Davis is a petroleum supply specialist currently working on Camp Taji's Forward Arming and Refueling Point.



Photos by Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD
arters Support Company, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 4th
Soldiers work as a team when refueling aircraft at the Forward
unsafe conditions and manning the fire extinguisher.



Spc. Orlando West, from Homer, La. with Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion of the 227th Aviation Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division crouches down as his counterpart works to refuel an aircraft. West is one of the many Soldiers that work a 12-hour shift on the Forward Arming and Refueling Point on Camp Taji.

Red Team

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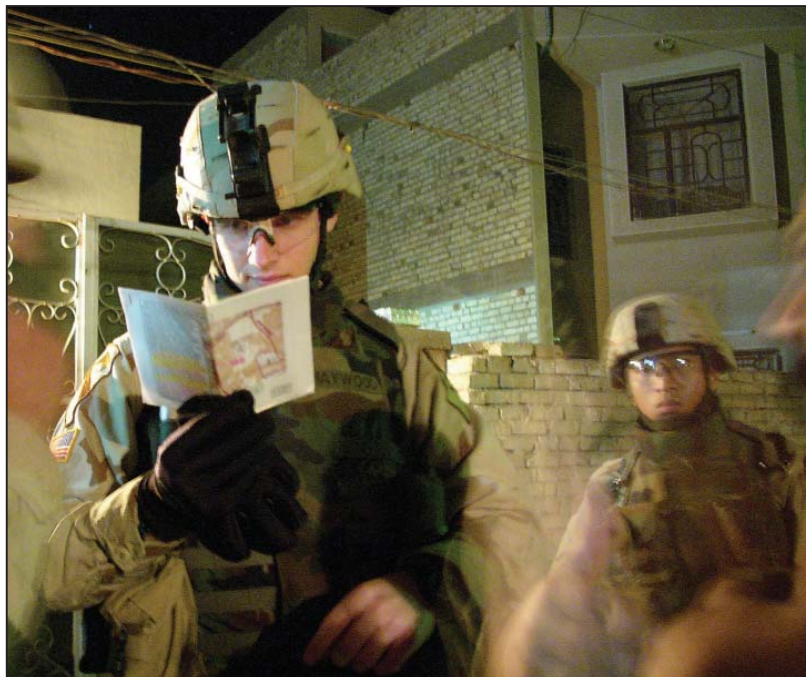
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Early-Morning Raid Nets Suspected Cell Leader



Photos by Cpl. Bill Putnam, 122nd MPAD

Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Dorsey, a platoon sergeant in Troop C, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, and Spc. Anthony Haas, a mortar crewman in Troop C, 1-7 Cav., count AK-47 ammunition during an early morning raid to capture a terror cell leader Dec. 14. Troopers from Comanche Troop, 1-7 Cav. arrested two men for involvement in a terror cell responsible for attacks against multinational forces and Iraqi civilians in the 5th Brigade Combat Team's area of operations. The Soldiers found one AK-47 rifle, four magazines of ammunition, boxes of .38-caliber pistol ammo, several CDs of propaganda, blank identification cards and license plates were seized.



2nd Lt. Clint Haywood, an intelligence officer in 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, reads the name of a suspected terror-cell organizer during a raid to arrest him Dec. 14. Troopers from Comanche Troop, 1-7 Cav. arrested two men for involvement in a terror cell responsible for attacks against multinational forces and Iraqi civilians in the 5th Brigade Combat Team's area of operations. The Soldiers found one AK-47 rifle, four magazines of ammunition, boxes of .38-caliber pistol ammo, several CDs of propaganda, blank identification cards and license plates were seized.

5th Brigade, Iraqi Ministry of Interior Join Forces for 'Operation Falcon Freedom'

By CPL. Bill Putnam
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL-SAQR, Baghdad, Iraq -- A large joint U.S.-Iraqi cordon-and-search of three Al Rashid neighborhoods netted 20 suspected insurgents and several weapons Dec. 5.

The mission was important because it showed the locals living in the area that the Iraqi National Guard Soldiers and Iraqi police officers are out there conducting business, trying to secure Baghdad, said Maj. Kenny Dale Harper, the executive officer for 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment.

"It was good for the IPs and ING to show 'we're here, we're going to be here,'" Harper said.

The mission, dubbed "Operation Falcon Freedom," is also a sign of things to come said officers in the 1st Cavalry Division's 5th Brigade Combat Team.

The 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment's mission that day was to provide a cen-

trally located command post for the IP and ING commanders to meet, plan and conduct the mission, Harper said.

Troopers from 1-7 Cavalry and tankers from 1-8 Cavalry watched for insurgent counter-attacks or car bombs, while several hundred of the ING soldiers, IPs and a special Iraqi commando unit searched the three areas, all east of the Al Dora Power Plant and along Baghdad's Highway 5. These areas were chosen because they were suspected of housing terrorist and insurgent cells.

U.S. Soldiers weren't actively searching any of the neighborhoods, Harper said. They were providing the outer cordons for the Iraqi units searching the homes, he noted. The 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, secured one neighborhood, while 1-8 Cav. secured the other two, Harper explained.

The searches were pretty successful. Several weapons including three machine guns and three rocket-propelled-grenade launchers were found

by Iraqi police officers. Numerous AK-47 rifles were also seized.

Most of them were detained after a short fire-fight with the ING and IP. One local national male was wounded by the Iraqi National Guard after he tried running a check point; he was later detained.

Harper said the mission was a successful step toward independent operations by the Iraqis in the future. Falcon Freedom's success was apparent because the higher-level leadership of the IP and INGs, the generals, met to conduct and lead their units, Harper said.

"It was a baby step to bolster their forces for operations in the Baghdad area," Harper said.

Al Rashid residents can expect more missions like Falcon Freedom to happen in the future, said Capt. Dave Chiarenza, battle captain for 5th BCT. "The Red Team lives on this stuff," Chiarenza said, referring to the nickname of 5th BCT.

Accident Prevention

Prevent accidents by enforcing standards.

Leaders should know their high-risk Soldiers and counsel them on correcting their behaviors.

Don't walk by; make on-the-spot corrections of unsafe actions.

Apply the risk management process to reduce mission hazards.

Maintain situational awareness and don't let your guard down.



Bowie Brigade

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By Staff Sgt. Rebekah-mae Bruns, 39th BC Team Public Affairs

Sgt. Christopher Woodruff works in his spare time to complete a mural that will represent the 1st Battalion, 153rd Infantry after they have left Iraq.

Arkansas Soldiers Leave Artistic Mark

By Staff Sgt. Rebekah-mae Bruns
39th BCT Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq-- The 3rd Battalion, 153rd Infantry Regiment is leaving their mark in history and instilling unit pride in Baghdad's International Zone with the mural of a warrior Indian that spans the height of a wall. Sgt. Christopher Woodruff, 26, of Malvern, Ark., designed the battalion mascot last fall in Fort Hood, Texas, while gearing up for the deployment to Iraq.

Woodruff didn't want to leave the 1st Calvary Division out of the design since his unit was attached to them so he added their patch as a part of the warrior's shield.

Forming metal is Woodruff's true talent when it comes to art, but he said he had no problems completing the project that included drawing and painting.

"I always had a talent but I learned the shading techniques in high school," Woodruff said.

Woodruff's design will also be used on the unit's deployment coin that's due out before the end of the year.

Medical Team Works to Save Americans, Iraqis

By Staff Sgt. Rebekah-mae Bruns
39th BCT Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - As soon as they received word, medics began politely shuffling past, quickly readying medical supplies and clearing off gurneys. A trauma victim was due to arrive at their small, MASH-like facility at any given moment. The patient? A local Iraqi with a gunshot wound to the foot. The circumstances were unclear but Soldiers, who were flagged down by local civilians, were bringing him in.

Events like this are common for the 39th Brigade's medical staff. For nearly nine months they have been treating and caring for both Iraqis and Americans. It was humble beginnings with their first facility. They worked and operated out of a tent for several months before attaining a scant but workable building that has now turned into a full swing treatment facility.

"Let's get this guy some morphine," yelled out Lt. Col. David Paladino, 55, of

Conway, Ark.

With the patient on the gurney and the I.V. started, medics bustled about cutting off his clothes and began to prepare the wound for cleaning.

"Allah..." moaned the patient as his legs bounced around and shook uncontrollably on the Gurney. "Allah..."

Meanwhile, another Iraqi man, who earlier had stopped on the road to help, held on to the wounded individual's hand in an effort to support.

The jobs of the medical staff have been two-fold. They take care of minor illnesses, infections, and skin rashes - things that daily evolve in Soldier care. But they also attend those injured in war and such said cases tend to be more trauma-oriented.

Last April, only two weeks after their arrival in Iraq, an enemy mortar attack struck at the very core of the brigade. The assault of mortars managed to cause the death of four individuals and seriously wounded 14 others; they were the first casualties for the Arkansas Bowie Brigade.

"That was our baptism into the country," said Paladino, a physician's assistant who served as a Special Forces medic in Vietnam. "None of them had simple injuries. They were high explosive injuries with shrapnel - so you had a blast effect."

That blast effect caused multiple traumas and amputees said Paladino. His staff had to react fast.

The frequency of trauma events for the clinic is unpredictable. Sometimes there is two or three a week and other times there aren't any. But most surprisingly, the majority of their traumas are not Americans, but instead are Iraqi National Guard (ING) and Iraqi Army Soldiers.

Most recently, a group of ING was ambushed with a roadside bomb and small arms fire. The Iraqi Soldiers were evacuated to the 39th's medical facility where seven of them were treated for gunshot wounds.

"We treat them the same as us," said Spc. Amanda Griffin, 28, of Little Rock, Ark.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Rebekah-mae Bruns, 39th BC Team Public Affairs

Lt. Col. David Paladino, of Conway, Ark., and Spc. Amanda Griffin wrap and bandage an Iraqi patient's foot after cleaning a gunshot wound.

"There's no variation between treatment for the Americans or the Iraqi's."

Griffin, a combat medic, begins pouring water over the man's wound to clean it. There are two large holes in his foot from where the bullet entered and exited. Pieces of the Tibia and Fibula bones are missing, and the artery in his foot is gone. A translator, who is kept on staff to help with language barriers, begins asking the patient questions about where he lives and what his name is. He mutters in Arabic the information needed, while gripping the shirt of the friendly Iraqi that stopped to help.

Helping wounded Iraqis gives the medics a unique opportunity to extend good will and demonstrate their kindness as Americans. Their hope is to build a more positive relationship through their patients.

"If they are conscious, they see that we are good and that we're trying to help," Griffin said. "They're human beings [just like us]."

The uncontrollable shake in the patient's leg is now gone. The morphine has taken effect and Paladino and Griffin carefully begin the task of bandaging his foot with

gauze and wrap. The next step is transport via helicopter for treatment at the Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad.

The medical team is well trained and versed in their roles, but it doesn't mean the trauma they see is simple to cope with.

"It's the things you see over here; they've helped [me] to mature and not take things for granted," said Griffin. "You have to build up an immunity to deal with what you see."

Some keep journals as a way of release and others simply talk about it or joke to dissolve the stress. Most of the staff has worked together over the last four years so the sense of family has also helped. But still there is the sense of brevity in life, the unshakable feeling that nothing should be taken for granted.

"Life is a gift," said Griffin adamantly. "You don't know what could happen. You could be breathing and gone the next. That's the reality."

With the patient now on the helicopter, the medics begin the tedious task of cleaning up, restocking and preparing for whatever event might come next. It could happen a week from now or it could take place within the next few minutes.



Spc. Trina Griffin, of Little Rock, Ark., starts an IV for a local Iraqi who was wounded with an unexplained gunshot to the foot.

Staff Judge Advocates Aid Iraqis in Tragedy

By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin
10th Mnt. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP AL TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq - Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team (Commandos), 10th Mountain Division, Staff Judge Advocate's Office work to right wrongs through compensation programs intended to bolster relations between Iraqis and Multi-National Forces.

"It shows good faith on the part of the government," said Capt. Louis Boston, Jr., 2nd BCT claims judge advocate, "Back in the states, if we have an accident with civilians involved, we compensate them. This is a positive operation and reflects positively on American Forces."

Boston said he has handled approximately 400 cases since October, including appeals. All claims fall under the Foreign Claims Act, which was introduced by Franklin Roosevelt on July 7, 1941, to "engender goodwill and promote friendly relations between the U.S. armed forces and host countries." The money is appropriated through Congress and is managed by the U.S. Armed Claim Services, Fort Meade, M.D.

The SJA cell compensates individuals for accidents including death, injuries, and property damage. Staff Sgt. Jared Robinson, 256th Brigade Combat Team, said the program is important to compensate Iraqis who were unintentionally harmed by Multi-National Forces.

"We're here cruising their streets, their nation," he said. "They don't have insurance. If we do something in which we're in the wrong, we're going to com-



By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin, 10th Mnt. Div. Public Affairs

Iraqis wait by a window to be compensated for accidents involving Multi-National Forces. Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division give up to \$15,000 for compensation.

Boston said the SJA team tries to compensate Iraqis as fairly as possible. The 2nd BCT SJA cell can give a maximum compensation of \$15,000. Anything they feel deserves more is referred to the division's SJA. On an average day, Robinson said they give around \$40,000. Robinson doles out cash on average twice a week: once with 2nd BCT and once with 256th BCT.

The exchange rate between American dollars and Iraqi Dinar is a great advantage to Iraqis, Boston said.

"Back in the states, \$5,000 wouldn't cover repairs for a car," he said. "Five thousand dollars here would buy a new Mercedes. We try to come up with a reasonable estimate in terms of Iraqi cus-

toms and standards. What is important is to be consistent."

Boston looks at the average price for a vehicle, house, or animal to determine the proper compensation. He also takes an Iraqi's livelihood to the property, such as a cab or an animal used for making profit, into consideration. This is an easy task compared to putting a price on a life lost. Boston and Robinson both said one of the most difficult parts of their job is giving compensation for Iraqis who were injured or lost a family member.

"When dealing with life and limb, you can't put a dollar price on it. But we try to be just and fair with our compensation," he said.

Boston said that not everyone who

comes for compensation receives it. Like in any case involving compensation in America, Iraqis must present evidence such as titles to property or medical documentation to receive compensation.

"We have a certain level of criteria, documentation that we expect," he said. "It's not that I doubt them, but we can't award them without evidence. The best evidence is documentation from U.S. Forces. We can look at [significant activities] and tell if what they say is accurate"

As in America, there are also people who try to take advantage of the system. Soldiers in the SJA cell therefore have to investigate claims just like it would be back home, Robinson said.

"We've had people trying to double dip," trying to receive payments twice for the same incident, he said. "Some claims are fraudulent. Some people make claims with no proof of ownership of property. We try to help as much as possible, but if they have no proof, we can't help."

To track "double dipping," the SJA cell uses data bases from other unit's prior claims settlements. They also do a thorough inspection of each case before compensating people.

Boston said he is proud of the work he does with the Army and the Iraqi people. He believes the work he does is a reflection of the American character.

"At the core of American society, we believe in justice and fairness. We believe in admitting when we're wrong and correcting it. It is one of the best ways for Iraqis to see that we're not all talk. We go beyond what we need to do, [and] we do what's right, even in a war zone."

1-509th Group Visits 10th Mountain Division

By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin
10th Mnt. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Baghdad, Iraq - Knowledge is power, and in this instance, knowledge can also be a defense.

A contingency of Soldier representing the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort

Polk, La., met with Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team (Commandos), 10th Mountain Division to gain knowledge on anti-Iraqi techniques.

Col. Mick Bednarek, commander of operations group, JRTC, said the goal was to absorb as much information as possible to make training more realistic for all Soldiers.

"The aim of the trip is to cover as much ground in Iraq as we can to get feedback to insure the training we provide is what we need," he said. "This will ensure forces get proper training. The key for us is to stay relevant in what we do in training centers by focusing on what the enemy does here."

Bednarek said he and his contingency learned much from the trip that they will take back to Fort Polk.

"I could write a book on all the things we learned here," he said, adding that his JRTC Soldiers are already very accurate in their portrayal of enemy opposing forces, or OPFOR as they are known throughout the Army. "Our scenarios at JRTC are a very close contemporary operation environment that prepares Soldiers against a tough, demanding, adaptive enemy."

The group also ran a number of operations, including patrols and missions with Iraqi National Guardsmen and Iraqi Police. A main focus was on insurgent tactics, but the contingency also observed the traits and habits of the ING and IP so they can repli-

cate it at JRTC

"At Fort Polk, we replicate three things: Iraqi Police, ING and anti-Iraqi forces," said Maj. James Keith, a plans officer from 1st Battalion, 13th Infantry Regiment, a National Guard unit from Illinois who are supporting JRTC as OPFOR. "We wanted to make sure the picture of IPs and ING are accurate."

The JRTC Soldiers observed everything from Iraqi rank structure to how they react to hostile fire. All this is to paint an accurate picture of the Multi-National Forces so they can teach Soldiers how to work with their Iraqi counterparts.

"The face we put on the ING will be replicated at JRTC," said Capt. Will Olson, Company A, 1-13 Inf. commander and OPFOR Soldier. "We all grow beards. We don't cut our hair and don't speak English. We've had guys ask us 'Are you really Americans?'"

Working with 2nd BCT Soldiers also provided the added bonus of seeing firsthand the work Soldiers from A and B Company, 1st Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment are doing. The two companies deployed to Iraq and are attached to 2nd BCT. This is their first deployment since World War II.

"It was a great added benefit to be out with units, going on patrol, with them day and night. It was powerful," Bednarek said. "They're attached to a great brigade who are

focused on accomplishing the mission."

Col. Mark Milley, 2nd BCT commander, said the 1-509th Soldiers attached to him are a valued asset at both JRTC and Iraq. The experience they bring as OPFOR gives them an added advantage when facing anti-Iraqi forces.

"At JRTC we called them the 'men in black,'" Milley said. "Over here we encounter men in black pajamas firing mortars. Many things they do at JRTC the enemy is doing here. When the president decides to redeploy them, they can go back to JRTC. But until then, the paratroopers are ours. They are a great asset."

Milley said he appreciates the efforts of the 1-509th Soldiers. He also expressed his gratitude to Bednarek, who was instrumental in preparing 2nd BCT for deployment.

Soldiers from 2nd BCT didn't have time to train at Fort Polk before deployment, so Bednarek brought the training to Fort Drum, N.Y. They helped organize a joint training exercise between Fort Drum and attached units from Fort Riley, Kan. and Fort Irwin, Calif. Milley said he asked Bednarek, realizing the short notice would be a difficult challenge. To Milley's delight, Bednarek's response was "when do you want it done."

"They did this all in 15 days, which in Army time is very quick," Milley said. "It was valued training. 2nd BCT owes a debt of gratitude to (the operations group)."



By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin, 10th Mnt. Div. Public Affairs
Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Fort Polk, La., hand out candy to Iraqi children near Baghdad.

Tiger Brigade

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By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin, 10th Mnt. Div. Public Affairs
Cpl. Lou Wetuski, 1st Battalion, 156th Armor Regiment, Louisiana National Guard, pulls security after his unit discovered an insurgent safe-house Dec. 13. The Tiger Brigade discovered a weapons cache, medical supplies and a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device with more than 1,000 pounds of explosives.

Tiger Brigade Discovers Insurgent Safe-House

By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin
10th Mnt. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP AL TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq- Curiosity may have killed the cat, but in this instance, it saved the lives of an untold number of people

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 156th Armor Regiment, Louisiana National Guard discovered an insurgent safe-house in western Baghdad on their first day in a new area of operations.

The Tiger Brigade was patrolling the back roads around farmland that once belonged to Saddam Hussein's son Uday. They were passing an inconspicuous farmhouse when Staff Sgt. Eric Lee, 156th AR, spotted an expensive vehicle he felt was out of place in the country surroundings. He stopped the convoy and had his Soldiers dismount for further investigation.

"That Soldier probably saved 50 lives from attention to detail," said Col. Mark Milley, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division commander.

When the Soldiers approached the house, several suspected insurgents fled in expensive automobiles. Two suspects were detained before they could escape. The 156th Soldiers knew something was amiss and approached the house with increased caution.

"We moved to clear the area, supported by gun trucks," said Sgt. Dominick Torti, 156th AR. "When we got closer, we noticed weapons inside the hut."

Tension mounted as the Soldiers approached the hut. They knew there was definitely insurgent activity occurring there, but they didn't know to what extent.

"At first we were nervous," Lee said. "We knew we had to get the area secured. Once we got our assets in place, we started a cordon search of the building."

What the Soldiers found was more than a parking garage. One vehicle was rigged with explosives and

ready for use. The vehicles contained approximately 1,000 pounds of explosives, including an Italian-made anti-ship bomb, three 155 mm artillery rounds, and 300 pounds of ammonium nitrate. Another anti-ship bomb laid in the safe house, presumably to be used for another vehicle-improvised explosive device. Staff Sgt. Michael Stoddard, 2nd BCT, said this was not an every day find.

"The anti-ship bomb sits on the bottom of the ocean," he said. "The air bubble it creates makes rips ships apart. Those usually don't just wash up onto the field."

The 156th AR Soldiers also found a weapons cache of rockets, mortars and anti-tank weapons. Also confiscated was a cache of medical supplies and industrial chemicals. Milley said the keen awareness of the 156th AR Soldiers made a well-hidden enemy safe house obsolete.

"The [insurgents] must be reading the ranger handbook," Milley said. "It was well hidden, off the beaten road away from everything."



Tigers Help Farmers With Seeds During 'Operation Amber Waves'

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq--The Tigers of the 256th Brigade Combat Team are continuing their efforts to assist the people of Iraq build their future. Soldiers and local council members are working hand in hand distributing high quality wheat seed as part of Operation Amber Waves, a program to revitalize agriculture in this predominately rural sector just west of Baghdad. This in turn, will ultimately raise the economy.

Maj. Carrie Acree of the 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion attached to 2nd Battalion, 156th Regiment, 256th BCT has been building a relationship with the Agur Quf Najia council, whose area covers 99 percent of the sector in which 2nd Battalion operates.

"Iraq's wheat seed has been degraded tremendously because the farmers harvest their grain and then use the same wheat to replant," Acree said. "What they have right now is fit for livestock. We're trying to bring that wheat

grade back up to where it's good for human consumption. Thus they can get a better price on the market and can start selling it internationally. This will help the economy tremendously."

So far, the operation has brought in 434 tons of very high grade wheat seed. Since a very large portion of Iraq is farmland. It's a huge deal.

According to Maj. Steven Kvaal, 433rd Civil Affairs Battalion, the farmers go through a very quick process of obtaining the seed. All cars entering the area go through a checkpoint search before they are allowed into the distribution area. The first step is for the farmer to meet with a council member and present their land deed for approval. The legitimacy is determined by the council. The amount of seed that is given to a farmer is contingent upon the amount of land that he has. Once the outcome has been decided, the council member writes out a ticket and stamps it for validity. The farmer then drives his truck to the pick-up site, receives his seed, and

drives home to plant it.

The Ministry of Agriculture has guaranteed to purchase all of the grain produced after the harvest at a set price. That price is slightly lower than what they could get at the world market. It's an incentive for the farmers to sell their harvest internationally because they can make a slightly higher profit than what the Ministry of Agriculture would pay them for it. Regardless, if the farmer can't find a buyer on an international market, they are going to make money on this wheat. This will help the economy as well as in building their wheat seed grade back up to an A Grade. The farmers will then use that wheat seed to start producing for the next planting.

Acree praises the Iraqi farmers and Najia Members for their participation in the process.

"The reaction of the people has been very nice," she said. "They've been helpful and tremendously grateful for this. They thank us constantly and understand that we are here to help them to legitimize the Najia."



By Sgt. Thomas Benoit, 256th BCT Public Affairs
Members of the Agur Quf Najia council distribute grain and seed to local farmers as part of "Operation Amber Waves". The Dec. 6 seed distribution supported improved agriculture economics through the utilization of improved seed stock.

Second Time Around:

82nd Airborne Troops Reminisce About OIF I

By Pfc. Mike Pryor
82nd Airborne Division
Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, IRAQ - Making a night air assault landing by Chinook Helicopter into a war zone can be a disorienting experience. But when Spc. Alexander McCoy touched down on a field near Baghdad's famous Crossed Sabers Memorial in the early hours of Dec. 11, he found himself on familiar territory.

Last January, near the end of his first deployment to Iraq, McCoy, Company A, 3rd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, was awarded his Combat Infantryman Badge at a ceremony held on the very same field. That day, under the shadows of the two massive sabers, McCoy's squad leader pinned the coveted badge on his uniform. McCoy, who returned home later that month, said receiving his CIB that day meant he had done his job.

Now he is back in Iraq with a new job to do.

McCoy and approximately 1,500 other paratroopers from the 82nd deployed to Iraq in early December to provide



By Sgt. John Queen, 3rd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

Under the cover of darkness Soldiers from Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 325th Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, shuffle away from a CH-47 Chinook that dropped them off on the parade grounds at the crossed sabers monument in central Baghdad.

security and support for the upcoming democratic elections. Most of McCoy's battalion arrived in Baghdad via air assault from Camp Stryker Dec. 11 and 12.

Despite fond memories of Crossed Sabers Field from the January ceremony, McCoy's

mind was focused solely on the present mission during this air assault landing, he said.

"The nice thing was that we knew the area, but it was still just another LZ [landing zone]," he said.

McCoy and the rest of Company A might have been in

more of a mood to reminisce if they hadn't had a close call during the flight from Camp Stryker to the field.

"We heard some AK-47 fire and we got locked on by something, must have been a surface-to-air missile," said Sgt. First Class Frederic Garnett, a

platoon leader with Co. A.

The Chinook crew took evasive action and dropped countermeasures, causing whatever had them in its sights to miss. In seconds, the danger had passed. The fact that Co. A had already been attacked before ever stepping foot in Baghdad was sobering to some of the paratroopers.

"It was like, oh yeah, we're back here again. It reminded us that this is for real," said McCoy.

For some of the company's newer paratroopers without CIBs, the experience put into perspective what it means to wear the badge.

"[When the Chinook came under attack], it hit that this was real," said Spc. Aaron Ralston, a radio transmitter operator for Co. A on his first deployment.

Ralston won't be spending his time in Iraq dreaming about having his CIB pinned on at a ceremony like McCoy had, he said.

"I look forward to getting out of here in one piece. I'm not hunting for badges and I'm not looking for glory," he said. "I'm just ready to do my job."

Constructing a Miracle

Engineers Hammer Out New Chapel for 256th BCT

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT Public Affairs

CAMP TIGERLAND, Baghdad--Soldiers from Company B, 411th Engineer Battalion are making Iraq feel a little more like home for the 256th Tiger Brigade Combat Team. A new chapel for the brigade is the latest improvement slated for the unit.

Lt. Col. Robert Baker, chaplain for the 256th Brigade Combat Team, is working hand-in-hand with the 411th to see that the project is completed on time. And he lets the engineers how much their work means the Tiger Brigade.

"I go to the construction site everyday to talk to them and bring them goodies on behalf of the brigade to show our appreciation," he said.

The 411th is a gumbo of different units all its own. It is made up of Soldiers from Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, and all over the south Pacific. They've been busy.

"Right now, we're scheduled to open the new Tigerland Chapel for the holidays with the first service being on Christmas Eve," Baker said. "It will hold a capacity of about two hundred people ...maybe a little more."

Staff Sgt. Scott Strong of the 411th is overseeing the construction for his battalion. He said the project fell into their laps at the last minute, but that his team is well prepared to complete their mission by the deadline.

"Our projects usually land in our laps within a week of when we're supposed to start them and we go out and assess the site to see what kind of materials we may need," he said.

Strong said there are never any real set plans right away, but that once they receive the blueprints, things just start falling neatly into place for his team.

In the nine months that the 411th has been in Iraq, they

have been given seven projects ranging from the 1st Cavalry Division's Judge Advocate General office to some housing projects. They have even built a post exchange (PX) and a helipad.

The 411th is responsible for sites inside of Camp Liberty.

A major player in Strong's team of carpenters is Sgt. Angelique Yacapin, from Hawaii. As a civilian, she is working toward a career in carpentry as an apprentice under the Carpenter's Union in her area. Yacapin says that she has loved building things since she was a little girl.

"My mom has a farm and as I was growing up, we used to build stuff all the time for her," she said. "We've built a lot of structures like greenhouses and chicken coops, and I really like doing this sort of work."

Baker sang high praises of Yacapin. He said her hard work and the labor of her fellow Soldiers will make this a better

place for the Soldiers of the 256th.

"The 411th has some great folks and Sgt. Yacapin is one of their best, even according to her boss," he said. "The Soldiers of the 256 BCT need to make sure that they attend services in the new chapel once it's complete."



By Spc. Erin Robicheaux, 256th Brigade Combat Team

Sgt. Angelique Yacapin a carpenter with the 411th Engineer Battalion hammers a nail into what will soon be a place of worship for the Soldiers of the 256th Brigade.

In Recognition

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In the Face of Tragedy

Cavalry Soldiers Carry on for a Fallen Comrade

By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin
10th Mnt. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP AL-TAHREER, Baghdad -- Like the daily prayer before patrol, Soldiers gathered again to pay respect

and honor to their own. They left with the understanding their brother's death, while tragic, was not in vain.

Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, remembered Spc. Blain M Ebert Nov. 26 in Baghdad.

Ebert was shot by a sniper while conducting patrols in Baghdad Nov. 22.

He was born March 30, 1982 in Colfax, Washington. He joined the Army in June 2001 after finishing high school. His fellow Soldiers said he was a reliable Soldier and a

good friend who made a lasting impact on his comrades.

Ebert was the "heartbeat of the platoon," according to one noncommissioned officer in the platoon.

Chaplain (Cpt.) Daniel Kahn, 210th Forward Support Battalion chaplain, said many of Ebert's friends said he was considered one of the top Bradley gunners in his battery and his professionalism will be missed.

Spc. Jason Buscambell, a close friend to Ebert, was with him in his last moments of life. He said at the memorial that when his friend died, he didn't understand why. His unit prays before every mission for safety and yet his friend is gone. Upon reflection, he likened questioning God's will to questioning his chain of command.

"You don't ask why," he said, because he has faith in his command and in God.

"Some may ask, 'Why God? Why did this happen? Why him?'" he said. "God will provide the answers that we seek. But in the meantime, we

will mourn for our brother and shed tears for him. Most importantly, we will honor him for getting up every day, getting dressed, not being a quitter and never accepting defeat. We will see this through to the end, in honor of him."

"God does not always give us the answer, but he always gives us comfort," Kahn said.

Kahn said Ebert died, but he did not lose his life. His life was an honorable sacrifice, not a loss.

"It is not appropriate to say that he lost his life, because he gave his life to the Army and to his country," he said. "He swore allegiance to his country and took an oath and honored it every day."

Ebert's awards include: The Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, the Army Commendation Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon and the Army Expert Marksman Badge. He is survived by his wife, Shilanta, and his parents Michael and Lucy.



Soldiers pay their final respects to Spc. Blain M. Ebert, 4th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division Nov. 26. Ebert was killed while patrolling Baghdad Nov. 22.

Tigers Earn ARCOMs, "I Impact" Bronze Star

By Cpt. Cameron McGee
256th Bde. Combat Team

CAMP AL TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq -- Sixteen Soldiers from 1st Battalion 156th Armor Regiment, 256th Brigade Combat Team, attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, were awarded the Army Commendation Medal in a ceremony conducted by Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli.

Chiarelli awarded 17 impact awards to Soldiers Dec.

20, who found a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) believed to be targeting Baghdad's International Zone.

Staff Sgt. Eric Lee was the Soldier who initially noticed the vehicle and whose gut instincts led to the discovery.

On a routine patrol, the Soldiers noticed a suspicious vehicle and searched it, finding the VBIED and a weapons cache that contained an anti-ship mine, mortar rounds, RPK machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), grenades, small arms ammunition, rocket launchers, propane tanks, detonation cord, and numerous documents. The VBIED had another anti-ship mine and nine 30 pound bags of ammonium nitrate.

The Soldiers also successfully detained two local national males on site and destroyed both the weapons cache and VBIED.

As a result, Chiarelli requested a special ceremony to present Lee with an impact Bronze Star Medal. The Bronze Star Medal is awarded to any person who distinguished him-



Photos by Spc. Erin Robicheaux, 256th Brigade Combat Team

(Above) Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, commanding general of the 1st Cavalry Division, presents Army Commendation Medals to Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 156th Armor Regiment, 256th Brigade Combat Team, attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division for their successful detainment of two local nationals and for their destruction of a weapons cache and vehicle-borne improvised explosive device.

self or herself by heroic or meritorious achievement or service. "There are literally hundreds of people who are alive today, who will never know that the actions of this Soldier saved their lives," Chiarelli said.

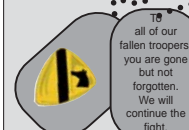
For their actions, the following Soldiers were awarded the Army Commendation Medal: Sgt. 1st Class Miguel

Robles, Spc. William Cox, Staff Sgt. Erik Alvarez, Spc. Trey Harold, Sgt. Roger Allen, Spc. Ryan Jacobsen, Sgt. Kip Cochran, Spc. Justin Lowery, Sgt. William Cook, Spc. Craig Nelson, Sgt. Dominick Torti, Spc. Alan Parker, Sgt. Paul Trucinski, Spc. Joshua Staf, Spc. Chase Breed, and Spc. Lou Wetuski.

Our Fallen Troops

Spc. Jose Riveraserrano

2nd Lt. Christopher Barnett



(Below) Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, commanding general of the 1st Cavalry Division, pins an Army Commendation Medal on Spc. Trey Harold from Shreveport, La. of 1st Battalion 156th Armor Regiment.

'Primer' Puts Fresh Spin on Old Science Fiction

Heavy; deconstructionism; minimalism. These are a few of the many, many words that came to my mind after viewing first-time filmmaker Shane Carruth's filmmaking debut "Primer," a cerebral jigsaw puzzle of science, philosophy and humanism.

The independently-made film

follows two ambitious, young engineers named Aaron (played by Carruth) and Abe (played by first-time actor David Sullivan), who spend their nights and weekends locked up in their garages using everything and the kitchen sink to try to come up with that one BIG invention that will change the

world.

The movie starts as they begin work on their latest experiment, an attempt to reduce gravity's hold on objects using super-cooled ceramics that they hope will create a revolution in modern transportation methods.

As with most BIG inventions, they find that the side effects created by the machine they've built—referred to as "the box"—are more significant than their original intent.

Upon investigating these effects, they find that somehow they've created a sort of time machine that allows them to travel back in time to the point when they turned the machine on.

So, for example, if they turned the machine on at the beginning of the day, waited until the end of the day to climb into it and stayed inside for the precise amount of time the machine has been on, they would emerge when they first turned on the machine.

At first Abe and Aaron use the machine to dabble in the stock market, profiting off of sharply rising stocks. Eventually however, humanity's darker side must rear its ugly head as the two young inventors' dynamic natures clash in

LeDrew's Reviews

Sp. Erik
LeDrew

Movie
Critic



a whirlwind of lies and paranoia.

Although the possibilities and perils of time-travel have been explored in other movies before, what really sets "Primer" up for success is its no-nonsense, realistic approach to science fiction (i.e. the phrase "time machine" is not mentioned once, that I can recall).

In fact, it would be more apt to call this movie "science facton" instead of science fiction.

As was mentioned before, "Primer" was an independently made film, made on a \$7,000 budget, which doesn't lend to very many special effects. But something like that wouldn't serve the movie's intent anyway.

Writer/Director Carruth (who also, it must be said, edited, and scored the movie as well, in addition to playing the character Aaron) approaches the movie with a very low-key style, limiting

flashy camera moves and opting for a minimalist reality over a pompous fantasy. This greatly serves the leaps of faith the audience must take in believing that time travel is possible.

Additionally, there is no dialogue that is wasted in this lean, 79-minute film. Every line, every word, serves to set up a world that is here and now, and wholly believable.

The area where Carruth really goes for broke is the way the film is edited. At first the story seems incredibly straight-forward, but the more Abe and Aaron push the possibilities of their machine to its limits, the more vigorous and frenzied the film becomes.

Carruth's editing in "Primer" is truly a deconstruction of linear-storytelling, a movie so ingeniously complex, that "Memento" feels like simple storytelling by comparison.

Although "Primer" places a heavy intellectual load on the audience through its science and storytelling, it's an ambitious, near-flawless piece of intelligent sci-fi that thankfully doesn't limit itself to the lower-common denominator. Which in this day of computer-generated imagery, is a rare sight.



Photo courtesy ThinkFilm

Abe (David Sullivan, left) and Aaron (Shane Carruth) tinker with the innards of 'the box', their mysterious machine in the sci-fi head-trip 'Primer.'

Defenses on Display as Liberty's Warriors Down Victory's Riders

By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel
122nd MPAD

Headquarters Company, 39th Spt. Bat. (1-2) 7-6.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - A battle of defenses erupted on this chilly Dec 17 afternoon as the 'Weekend Warriors' of the 1115th Transportation Company, 39th Support Battalion (1-2) held off a last minute drive to beat their battalion rivals the 'Dirty Southern Riders (DSRs)' from

Winning the coin toss, the 1115th's offense took to the field looking to make a quick statement lead by quarterback and coach Staff Sgt. Kenny Hill. Instead it would be HHC's defense that would put the exclamation point on the first opening minutes as four downs, three blocked passes and a failed running attempt. Later the DSR's offense took over.

Not to be outdone, Spc. Corey 'Lightnin' Bolt' Watson picked off the first pass from the DSR's QB Spc. Lawrence 'Doc' Tyler, dashing for 15 yards before being brought down. It was the first of what would be three picks by Watson, ultimately dooming the DSR's offensive onslaught.

"I just kept watching the QB's eyes," said Watson, "and then made sure I was where he was looking."

Neither offense was a match for these dominant defenses until near the end of the first half when Tyler strung together three consecutive ground gains of 5, 15 and 10 yards getting his team inside the red zone, just five short yards from the goal line.

Looking to stop Tyler's momentum Hill called a time out, huddling his team.

"All right guys, this is where

you gotta hold him," he said, "this is where you've got to step up and show what you're made of."

The motivational speech must have had a rousing effect as the boys of the 1115th Trans Co. brought down the iron curtain, halting the DSR's advance and denying them the elusive end zone.

At half-time, the score told the story; deadlocked at nil.

Trying to get his team on track, DSR coach Spc. Dorian Humphrey made a second half substitution bringing himself in as the QB.

"We had to do something to try and mix it up a little bit," Humphrey said. "They had stopped everything we had thrown at them so far, so we had to try something different."

Starting the second half with renewed vigor, the DSR offensive machine was quickly foiled again by Watson as he reached out for his second pass-grab of the game, taking the wind out the DSR's sails.

With 2 and a half minutes left in the game, Hill found a wide open Watson making a mad dash down the sideline and dropped a 30-yard bomb into his outstretched arms. Defenders dove to stop Watson as he easily sprinted into the end zone, putting the 'Weekend Warriors' up by 6. A



Photos by Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

Spc. Corey 'Lightnin' Bolt' Watson, receiver with the 1115th Transportation Company's Weekend Warriors, dusts a defender as he scampers into the end zone. The Weekend Warriors would hold on to beat their battalion rivals the Dirty Southern Riders of the Headquarters Company, 39th Support Battalion, 7-6.

short 10-yard-pass to Spc. Jeremy Newman converted the point after and the score stood at 7-0.

"I just kept thinking to myself, we've got to score here," said Watson, "and then I saw I had my man beat and I just made a mad dash for the end zone."

Marshalling his team for what would most likely be their final drive, Humphrey rushed and passed his team across the end zone to bring the DSR's within

one, but once again, the weekend warriors dropped the 'iron curtain' and denying the DSR's the needed extra point that would have sent the game into overtime.

Taking over on offense, Hill was content to just run out the clock securing his team's first victory of the season.

"It's all good," said a dejected Humphrey "we played a good game, they just played that much better. We'll get them next time."



Spc. Lawrence 'Doc' Tyler, Quarterback of the Dirty Southern Riders (DSR) from Headquarters Company, 39th Support Battalion makes the turn on his way to a 10 yard pick up during a regular season game between the DSR's and the Weekend Warriors of 1115th Transportation Company.